

Agency Approaches to Achieving Our Goals

Performance Measures

A combination of program output and environmental outcome measures will be used to measure progress towards meeting the clean water goal. Emphasis will be placed on measuring at the outcome level wherever possible and feasible. At the same time, a continuing need for a limited number of output measures is recognized. Output measures will be periodically reviewed to ensure that they are linked to environmental outcomes and, if they are no longer linked, they will be altered, dropped, or replaced. Having a mixture of environmental outcome measures and program output measures facilitates making decisions about changes to program implementation. If the intended environmental results are not being achieved, program activity accomplishments need to be evaluated in order to make decisions about changes in program emphasis, direction, and resource allocation.

Development of output and outcome measures for evaluating progress in restoring and protecting the nation's water resources has been underway for the past several years. A multi-year, multi-agency effort resulted in the development of 18 key indicators of water quality in June 1996. To track state progress, a set of core performance measures has been developed in partnership with the states for use in EPA-state agreements.

Two examples of performance measures for the clean and safe water goal are:

- Reduction in number of pounds of conventional and toxic pollutants discharged by key point sources.
- Number and percentage of community drinking water systems (and population served) with one or more violations of health-based requirements during the year.



G OAL 3: Safe Food

The foods Americans eat will be free from unsafe pesticide residues. Children especially will be protected from the health threats posed by pesticide residues, because they are among the most vulnerable groups in our society.

Importance of this Goal

The abundance, affordability, and wholesomeness of America's food supply depend in part upon the safe use of pesticides during food production, processing, storage, and transportation. Before any pesticide can be used legally, the law requires EPA to conclude that its use will not lead to unreasonable adverse effects, and that any food residues resulting from its use are reasonably certain to cause no harm. Nonetheless, pesticide application--especially when pesticides are misused--can sometimes lead to residues which could result in adverse health effects. EPA coordinates its food-safety program with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), who monitor pesticide residues in meat and other foods, collect authoritative data on patterns of food consumption, and protect food from microbiological contamination.

Objectives

- By 2005, the risk from agricultural use of pesticides will be reduced by 50 percent from 1995 levels.

- By 2005, use on food of current pesticides that do not meet the new statutory standard of "reasonable certainty of no harm" will be substantially eliminated.

What Will be Accomplished

A large number of pesticides approved for use on food have been classified as potential human carcinogens or may cause other serious adverse health effects at high levels of exposure. These high hazard pesticides are our highest priority, and we must aggressively minimize dietary exposure to them. By 2005, EPA expects to achieve a 50 percent reduction in risk posed by agricultural use of these pesticides, by doubling the annual rate of registrations for safer new chemical pesticides and biopesticides from 1995 levels and by encouraging a systematic transition toward lower-risk pesticides and pest management practices.

EPA will focus its efforts on implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 (FQPA), which amends both of EPA's principal pesticide regulatory authorities. The centerpiece of our work to implement the Act is a comprehensive reassessment of legally permissible levels of pesticide residues, or "tolerances." FQPA mandates that no pesticide residue will be permitted when there is less than "a reasonable certainty that no harm" will occur from exposure to that residue. This new standard requires the Agency to revise its risk-assessment practices to ensure adequate protection of the health of children and other vulnerable subpopulations, and to reconsider some 9,700 tolerances for specific pesticide residues approved before the passage of FQPA. By 2005 EPA expects to have substantially completed this "reassessment" of tolerances, and thereby to have confirmed the safety of the tolerances which remain and to have disallowed all pesticide uses that may leave residues that exceed levels for which there is a reasonable certainty no harm will ensue from human exposure. This means:

- By 2002, reregistration decisions will be completed for all pesticide active ingredients subject to registration under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), and all products containing those active ingredients will be reregistered by 2004.

- By 2005, ninety percent of the reassessment of pesticide residue tolerances mandated by FQPA will be completed.

Strategies for How It Will be Accomplished

EPA takes a two-pronged approach to safeguarding the food supply from the potential hazards of pesticides and other chemicals. We ensure that all newly registered agricultural pesticides will not harm human health or the environment. At the same time, we encourage reduced agricultural use of particularly hazardous pesticides first registered before contemporary data requirements and assessment techniques were developed. This reduction will result from a broad transition toward reduced-risk pesticides and pest management practices, including new biological agents which can substitute for chemical ingredients with a toxic mode of action. In this EPA is supported by a variety of USDA programs encouraging integrated pest management.

Most of EPA's food-safety activities aim to ensure the safety of the approximately 400 currently registered active pesticide ingredients in agricultural use. These efforts include:

- "Reregistration" of currently-registered pesticides to ensure their ingredients meet contemporary safety standards.
- "Special review" of pesticides that are suspected of posing unreasonable environmental or human health risks.



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- Review of the 9,700 existing tolerances and the phase-out of use of pesticides found not to meet the new standard.
- Tolerance reviews and reregistration activities entail critical review of current risk assessment practices, in particular to ensure adequate protection for children. To this end, EPA research activities will pursue the development of new tools to better characterize exposures (including consideration of cumulative exposures described above) and overall risks, as well as research on the best ways to encourage improved consumer choices.

Performance Measures

Performance measures for the safe food goal are of two kinds. First there are measures of program outputs--like registrations, reregistrations, and tolerance reassessments. Many of these measures are already in place; as the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act is implemented, additional output measures are being created for the new activities required by that act.

The second kind of measure is a measure of use of selected pesticides, as a surrogate for more direct measurement of the risk posed by those pesticides. Pesticide risk is complex--rooted in the hazards posed by the pesticide (such as neurotoxicity, or the ability to cause cancer), but also dependent on how, where, and how often the pesticide is used, what happens to it after it is used, what populations are exposed to it, how they are exposed, how often, and at what levels.

The challenge of direct measurement of pesticide risk has not yet been met, but we are working with stakeholders to develop better measures, and will incorporate them as soon as their merit is demonstrated. For the time being, however, aggregate use of pesticides of particular concern, based on data from existing sources of production data and estimates of agricultural use, is the best type of measure available to us.



G OAL 4: Preventing Pollution and Reducing Risk in Communities, Homes, Workplaces and Ecosystems

Pollution prevention and risk management strategies aimed at cost-effectively eliminating, reducing, or minimizing emissions and contamination will result in cleaner and safer environments in which all Americans can reside, work and enjoy life. EPA will safeguard ecosystems and promote the health of natural communities that are integral to the quality of life in this nation.

Importance of this Goal

EPA seeks to manage environmental risks to communities, homes, and workplaces, and to protect the environmental integrity of ecosystems, by a mix of regulatory programs with alternative approaches to achieve results at less cost and in more innovative, sustainable ways. Rather than “end of the pipe” controls, preventing pollution at the source is our strategy of first choice. (Where pollution prevention at the source is not a viable alternative, the Agency will employ waste minimization, disposal and remediation in a cost effective manner.) These efforts will be directed towards the greatest threats, such as those in our communities, homes, schools and workplaces that have significant impact on our most sensitive populations such as children, the elderly, and individuals with chronic diseases.